

Message Text

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SUBJECT: INTSUM 377 - AUGUST 10, 1977

MOSCOW, KUWAIT, SANA FOR AMBASSADORS

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING

NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

1. MIDDLE EAST PEACE. ATTENTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS
NOW INTENSELY FOCUSED ON THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION.
ALTHOUGH OPINION VARIES WIDELY ON WHETHER PROGRESS HAD
BEEN MADE ON THIS ISSUE, MOST OBSERVERS AGREE THAT THE
SUCCESS OF SECRETARY VANCE'S MISSION WILL BE JUDGED ON
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HOW THIS MATTER IS ADDRESSED. WE NOTE THAT THIS THEME
REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN EMPHASIS FROM SEVERAL
DAYS AGO WHEN THE MODERATE ARABS WERE DISAPPOINTED OVER
THE FAILURE TO PRESENT ITS OWN PROPOSALS. EMBASSY CAIRO,
FOR EXAMPLE, REPORTED THAT THE EGYPTIAN MEDIA HERALDED A
"BREAKTHROUGH" ON THE PALESTINIAN FRONT. ONE HIGH-LEVEL
EGYPTIAN COMMENTED THAT PRESIDENT CARTER'S STATEMENT ON

PALESTINIAN ACCEPTANCE OF UN RESOLUTION 242 WITH
MODIFICATIONS WAS "THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT

SINCE THE OCTOBER WAR."

2. THE PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT, HOWEVER, SEEMS SPLIT OVER HOW TO REACT TO RUMORS THAT THEIR LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT TO ALTER ITS POSITION ON UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 242 AND THE RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL. FOR EXAMPLE:

(A) THE PFLP CONFIRMED IN BEIRUT ITS CATEGORICAL REJECTION OF 242, DECLARING THAT THE RESOLUTION ENTRENCHES THE "ZIONIST ENTITY IN PALESTINE," GUARANTEES ITS BORDERS, AND ENDS THE STATE OF WAR WITH IT.

(B) A PLO SPOKESMAN IN BEIRUT DENIED THAT THE PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT HAD ANY PLANS TO ALTER ITS OPPOSITION TO 242.

(C) THE VOICE OF PALESTINE IN CAIRO DENOUNCED ANY MODIFICATION IN PREVIOUS POSITIONS WHILE INDIRECTLY CRITICIZING THE SECRETARY'S TRIP.

(D) FARUQ QADDOUMI WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT A NEW RESOLUTION WAS NECESSARY AND NOT JUST AN AMENDED 242.

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3. DESPITE THE NEGATIVE REACTION OF THE REJECTIONIST CAMP AND OF SEVERAL PLO SPOKESMEN, MANY PALESTINIANS INDICATED THAT A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE WAS UNDER CONSIDERATION. THESE PALESTINIANS SEEM TO AGREE WITH A PALESTINE NEWS AGENCY EDITORIAL WHICH NOTED THAT ALTERATION OF 242 MUST BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH UNGA RESOLUTION 3236, WHICH RECOGNIZED THE LEGITIMATE NATIONAL RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. EVEN HARD-LINE FATAH LEADER SALAH KHALAF WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THE PLO MIGHT ACCEPT 242 IF PROPERLY AMENDED.

4. THE SUPREME EGYPTIAN-PALESTINIAN JOINT COMMITTEE WILL MEET AGAIN TODAY TO DISCUSS THE CONTENTS OF A "LETTER" FROM SECRETARY VANCE TO FAHMY, ACCORDING TO THE VOICE OF PALESTINE. ARAFAT, AL-AHRAM NOTED YESTERDAY, WILL ARRIVE IN CAIRO DURING THE NEXT 24 HOURS. ALONG THIS LINE, THE EGYPTIAN NEWSPAPER AL-GUMHURRIYAH REPORTED THAT ARAFAT WILL MEET WITH THE SECRETARY ON THURSDAY.

5. THE PALESTINIANS, ACCORDING TO THESE PRESS REPORTS, WILL ATTEMPT TO REACH A POLICY AGREEMENT AMONG THEMSELVES AT THE BEGINNING OF NEXT WEEK. A PLO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER STATED THAT THIS COMMITTEE WILL MEET IN DAMASCUS

ON AUGUST 15 TO DISCUSS THE PALESTINIAN STAND. HE EXPECTED THAT ON THE FOLLOWING DAY THE PALESTINE CENTRAL COMMITTEE (PCC) WILL ANNOUNCE THE PALESTINIAN POSITION

ON BOTH "THE NEW US INCLINATION TO HOLD TALKS WITH THE PLO AND THE CONDITIONS WHICH THE US ATTACHES TO HOLDING TALKS." THE PCC WAS EMPOWERED BY THE PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL LAST MARCH TO MAKE MAJOR TACTICAL DECISIONS ON SETTLEMENT ISSUES.

6. ISRAELI PUBLIC REACTION TO THE ALLEGED PALESTINIAN WILLINGNESS TO RECOGNIZE ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST HAS BEEN UNIVERSALLY NEGATIVE. ISRAELIS NEARLY UNANIMOUSLY
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HAVE STATED THAT THEY WILL NOT NEGOTIATE WITH THE PLO UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES:

(A) DAYAN SAID THAT EVEN IF THE PLO ACCEPTS ALL OF 242, EVEN WITHOUT RESERVATIONS, "IT WOULD NOT MEAN WE WOULD ACCEPT THE PLO AS A PARTNER FOR GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS."

(B) MOSHE ARENS, A SENIOR LIKUD OFFICIAL SAID, "WE ARE NOT READY TO GO TO THE GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCE WITH THE PLO."

(C) "MAARIV" WARNED IN AN EDITORIAL THAT THE US, BY RECOGNIZING THE PLO, WOULD LOSE ITS CREDIBILITY IN ISRAELI EYES. (CONFIDENTIAL)

7. ISRAEL. A SENIOR ISRAELI OFFICIAL INDICATED THAT ISRAEL IS PLANNING A MAJOR MILITARY INCURSION INTO SOUTHERN LEBANON SOON TO SHORE UP THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS' POSITION AND DRIVE OUT THE PALESTINIAN GUERRILLAS IN THE BORDER AREA. THE OFFICIAL SAID THAT ISRAEL WAS UNHAPPY BECAUSE ITS CHRISTIAN ALLIES' POSITION WAS BECOMING "PROGRESSIVELY WORSE."

8. THE ISRAELIS' STATED INTENTION, HOWEVER, APPEARS TO BE MEANT TO SERVE OTHER OBJECTIVES. WE STRONGLY SUSPECT THAT THE ISRAELIS HOPE PRIMARILY TO DERAIL ANY MOVE UNDER CONSIDERATION BY PALESTINIAN MODERATES TO ACCEPT UN RESOLUTION 242 IN SOME FORM. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT ISRAEL IS TRYING TO DIVERT THE SECRETARY'S ATTENTION FROM SUBSTANTIVE PEACE ISSUES DURING HIS CURRENT VISIT TO TEL AVIV OR IS USING THE THREAT OF A MILITARY INCURSION TO DISSUADE THE US FROM CONTINUING TO ENCOURAGE THE
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PALESTINIANS TO MODIFY THEIR POSITION ON RESOLUTION 242.

9. THERE HAS BEEN NO DRAMATIC OR SIGNIFICANT CHANGE ALONG LEBANON'S SOUTHERN BORDER OVER THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS THAT

WOULD WARRANT SUCH A STRONG ISRAELI COUNTERMOVE. IN FACT, ISRAELI MILITARY AND INTELLIGENCE OFFICIALS, WHO WERE NOT AWARE OF ANY PLANS FOR AN INCURSION, SAID YESTERDAY THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME INCREASE IN FIGHTING IN THE SOUTH, BUT NOTHING SIGNIFICANT. THEY ALSO INDICATED THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PALESTINIAN GUERRILLAS IN THE SOUTH IN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS.

10. OTHER SOURCES INDICATE THAT THE RECENT FIGHTING HAS BEEN CONFINED TO THE ARTILLERY EXCHANGES THAT ARE CHRONIC IN THE SOUTH. THE ISRAELIS WERE SHELLING PALESTINIAN POSITIONS AGAIN LAST NIGHT, ACCORDING TO A RELIABLE PALESTINIAN SOURCE.

11. THE ISRAELIS AND THEIR CHRISTIAN ALLIES MAY BE WORRIED THAT THE RECENT SHATURAH AGREEMENT COULD LEAD TO A SIGNIFICANT WEAKENING OF THE CHRISTIAN POSITION, PARTICULARLY IN THE SOUTH, BUT THE ISRAELI OFFICIAL'S ASSERTION THAT THE CHRISTIANS' CURRENT POSITION IS GROWING WORSE IS OVERBLOWN AND APPEARS DESIGNED PRIMARILY TO JUSTIFY A MILITARY INCURSION IF THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT ACTUALLY DECIDES TO MOVE FORCES INTO SOUTHERN LEBANON.

12. SUCH AN INCURSION WOULD THROW THE PALESTINIANS INTO DISARRAY AND MAKE IT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR ARAFAT AND OTHER PALESTINIAN MODERATES TO PUSH FOR ACCEPTANCE OF RESOLUTION 242 IN THE FACE OF STRONG EXTREMIST SENTIMENT AMONG THE PALESTINIAN RANK AND FILE.

13. THE REACTION OF THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT TO A MAJOR ISRAELI INCURSION WOULD BE SHARP AND IMMEDIATE. DAMASCUS
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WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY ACCUSE THE ISRAELIS OF ATTEMPTING TO DISRUPT THE PEACE NEGOTIATING PROCESS AND MIGHT SUSPECT US COLLUSION.

14. THE SYRIANS WOULD PROBABLY REACT VERY CAUTIOUSLY ON THE MILITARY SIDE, HOWEVER, AND WOULD ATTEMPT TO AVOID A DIRECT MILITARY CONFRONTATION WITH ISRAEL. WITH EGYPT PREOCCUPIED WITH LIBYA, AND SYRIAN FORCES SCATTERED OVER LEBANON AND ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS, THE ARABS ARE IN A WEAK MILITARY POSITION TO RESPOND TO ANY ISRAELI MILITARY INITIATIVE OF THIS KIND.

15. THE SAUDIS' REACTION TO A MAJOR ISRAELI INCURSION IN LEBANON WOULD DEPEND HEAVILY ON THE EXACT CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT THEIR IMMEDIATE IMPULSE WOULD BE TO TURN TO THE US

TO FORCE AN IMMEDIATE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. THEY PROBABLY WOULD NOT SUSPECT THE US OF COMPLICITY BUT WOULD BE

ANGRY AT A WEAK US RESPONSE, WHICH THEY WOULD INTERPRET AS CONDONATION.

16. THE CHIEF SAUDI CONCERN WOULD BE OVER THE FUTURE OF THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS. A MAJOR ISRAELI INCURSION PRESUMABLY WOULD NOT ONLY FORECLOSE ANY MODERATION IN THE PALESTINIAN POSITION FOR THE TIME BEING BUT WOULD ALSO STRENGTHEN THE HAND OF PALESTINIAN REJECTIONISTS AND RADICAL ARAB STATES.

17. EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT SADAT HAS BEEN CONCERNED FOR SOME TIME ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF ISRAELI-INITIATED MILITARY ACTION IN LEBANON THAT COULD SPOIL CHANCES FOR THE PEACE PROCESS TO CONTINUE. HE WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY SEE SUCH ACTION AS CONCLUSIVE PROOF THAT THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT IS SECRET

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NOT INTERESTED IN NEGOTIATIONS. IT WOULD BE A BITTER SET-BACK FOR SADAT'S POLICIES, UNLESS THE INCURSION COULD BE QUICKLY BROUGHT TO A STOP, AND WOULD FORCE HIS GOVERNMENT TO GIVE MORE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO THE ARABS' MILITARY OPTIONS. (SECRET/NOFORN)

18. EGYPT. THE USSR, IN RESPONSE TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EGYPTIAN CHARGES, HAS DENIED THAT ITS AIRCRAFT TRIED TO JAM EGYPTIAN COMMUNICATIONS AND RADAR DURING THE HOSTILITIES BETWEEN EGYPT AND LIBYA. THE SOVIETS HAVE TRIED TO BE CIRCUMSPECT IN THEIR COMMENTARY ON THE BORDER CLASHES, REFUSING TO COMMENT ON PRESIDENT SADAT'S ACCUSATIONS REGARDING ALLEGED SOVIET INVOLVEMENT, BUT APPARENTLY CAIRO IS INTENT ON PRESSING ITS CASE FOR SOVIET PERFDY. THESE CHARGES CANNOT BE SUBSTANTIATED.

19. PREVIOUSLY, THE SOVIETS HAD IGNORED SADAT'S CHARGES THAT THE USSR HAD SUPPORTED LIBYAN SUBVERSIVE AND TERRORIST OPERATIONS PRIOR TO THE FIGHTING, AS WELL AS US PRESS ACCOUNTS THAT THREE SOVIET MILITARY TECHNICIANS HAD BEEN KILLED IN EGYPTIAN AIR RAIDS ON LIBYAN RADAR INSTALLATIONS. THE EGYPTIAN PRESS REPORTED EARLIER THIS WEEK THAT FOREIGN MINISTER FAHMI HAD MET WITH THE SOVIET CHARGE IN CAIRO TO DISCUSS THE EGYPTIAN PROTEST REGARDING SOVIET INTERFERENCE. TWO WEEKS EARLIER, ACCORDING TO AN EGYPTIAN EMBASSY OFFICIAL IN MOSCOW, THE USSR AND EGYPT HAD EXCHANGED PROTESTS OVER THE RESPECTIVE PUBLIC COMMENTARIES ON THE FIGHTING.

20. THE SOVIETS HAVE HITHERTO GONE OUT OF THEIR WAY TO AVOID ANTAGONIZING THE EGYPTIANS DURING THE BORDER CLASHES WITH THE LIBYANS. DURING THE FIGHTING LAST MONTH, FOR EXAMPLE, THE SOVIETS EVEN USED EGYPT'S NATIONAL DAY TO CALL FOR A NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS. THE EGYPTIANS, ON THE OTHER HAND, SEEM INTENT ON USING

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THE SOVIETS TO ENCOURAGE GREATER US
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SUPPORT FOR CAIRO AND TO PROVIDE THE EGYPTIAN PUBLIC WITH
A MORE CONVINCING JUSTIFICATION FOR EGYPT'S MILITARY
ACTIONS AGAINST LIBYA.

21. SADAT AND HIS ADVISERS SEEM TO BE RELYING MORE AND
MORE HEAVILY ON THE THEME OF SOVIET-LIBYAN COLLABORATION
IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO GAIN PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE OF THEIR
DECISION TO ENGAGE LIBYA MILITARILY AND TO BOLSTER MORALE
AMONG TROOPS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE FIGHTING. BY STRESS-
ING THE SOVIET ANGLE, SADAT PRESUMABLY BELIEVES HE WILL
STRIKE A SENSITIVE CHORD NOT ONLY AMONG HIS OWN PEOPLE
BUT ALSO AMONG MODERATE ARAB LEADERS, WHO HAVE BEEN SOME-
WHAT HESITANT TO SUPPORT SADAT OPENLY AGAINST A FELLOW
ARAB, EVEN IF IT IS THE TROUBLESOME QADHAFI.

22. THE EGYPTIANS ALSO SEEM TO BE USING ALLEGATIONS OF
SOVIET INVOLVEMENT WITH LIBYA TO GAIN GREATER SUPPORT
FROM THE US. THE EGYPTIANS HAVE FOR SOME TIME FELT THAT
THE US DOES NOT FULLY APPRECIATE THE DANGERS QADHAFI
POSES TO US INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND THEY PROBABLY
BELIEVE WASHINGTON WILL BE MORE READILY PERSUADED THAT
EGYPTIAN ACTIONS AGAINST THE LIBYAN REGIME WERE
APPROPRIATE IF EGYPT CAN PROVE A STRONG CASE OF SOVIET-
LIBYA COLLABORATION. MOREOVER, SADAT HAS BEEN TRYING FOR
SOME TIME TO CONVINCE THE US THAT ISRAEL IS NOT THE ONLY
BULWARK AGAINST THE USSR IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND THAT
CAIRO CAN PERFORM THIS ROLE AS WELL AS IF NOT BETTER THAN
TEL AVIV.

23. THE INTENSITY OF EGYPT'S PROPAGANDA ATTACKS ON BOTH
THE SOVIETS AND THE LIBYANS SUGGESTS THAT EGYPTIAN
LEADERS ARE NOT ONLY TRYING TO JUSTIFY PAST ACTIONS BUT
MAY ALSO BE PREPARING THEIR CASE FOR RENEWED HOSTILITIES.
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EGYPTIAN LEADERS ARE REPORTED TO BE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING
SUCH ACTION SOON AFTER SECRETARY VANCE COMPLETES HIS
CURRENT TOUR OF THE AREA. MOREOVER, EGYPT'S ATTITUDE
TOWARD CONTINUING PALESTINIAN AND KUWAITI EFFORTS TO
ARRANGE A TRUCE SUGGESTS THAT CAIRO IS ONLY GOING
THROUGH THE MOTIONS OF SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS. (SECRET/
NOFORN) CHRISTOPHER

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